

HOW TO ORGANISE ONLINE EVENTS

MOVING YOUR EVENTS ONLINE

If travel restrictions have forced your business to reconsider your events, this 'How to' guide takes a look at how you could take your engagement online.

What is an online event?

Technology has made it possible to replicate physical events online. It's now possible to host anything from small webinars to extensive virtual conferences from your own home (or office when we return to work).

Just like with traditional events you host the event at a specific date and time, but all the content is delivered online. Depending on your technology choice you also have an option to record and then broadcast key messages.

The benefits of online events

- **Not restricted to a single location** - remote attendees can join the event from anywhere where they have internet access. This means you can reach a wider audience than those who would be willing to travel to a single location.
- **Cost effective for you** - There are no venue hire fees with virtual events and there's no need to provide catering either. You can also save on other costs like printing handouts too.
- **Time and cost effective for your audience** - online events are more convenient for your audience and they won't incur any travel costs, which could give your attendance rates a boost.

Things to consider when planning your online event



Define the purpose of your event

In order to plan a successful online event you need to be clear about what you're looking to achieve. The purpose of your event could be to raise awareness of your expertise in a particular trade sector.

Set clear goals and objectives

Your goals should support the purpose of the event; for example to increase awareness of your brand amongst businesses in your chosen sector. Once your goal is clear you should set measurable objectives that will need to be delivered if your event is to achieve your goals.

Well-defined objectives will help you plan and promote your event effectively. For example to attract X new businesses from sector Y to attend the event. But remember that events shouldn't just be used for generating new business opportunities. Events are an excellent way of building and rewarding customer loyalty.

Also, the objectives you set shouldn't just be linked to financial performance. Setting objectives for attendee engagement will push you to make the content and delivery of the event as interesting as possible. Objectives could include measures of sign-ups vs attendees, questions asked and social media mentions.

Pick a subject

What subject will really appeal to your target audience and help you achieve your event goals. Is there some common theme that's keeping the directors of these businesses up at night? Be really clear on what is in it for your attendees.

Decide on a format

How can you make the subject of the event as engaging as possible for your particular target audience. Can you cover everything you need to in one event or will you need to spread it over a series of events? If you intend to share presentations during the event, avoid death by powerpoint.

Set a time, date and duration

Think carefully about this one. What is the best time for the event to maximise attendance? Are there any dates you should avoid? Do some quick research with your target audience to understand how much time they will be willing to devote.

Like any good event, the timing needs to be planned meticulously. Think about how long each section will last and when will you answer questions or ask polls. Remember, the content needs to be concise and the agenda needs to keep flowing so you don't lose the audience's attention.



Define a registration process

The registration process should be as easy as possible for attendees. It should also capture all the data you need to measure the success of your event against your objectives and the data needed to market to them after the event. You may only need an email address, so don't put off participants with long forms. Also, don't forget that from a GDPR perspective you'll need to make it clear how you intend to use their data for promotional purposes in the future.

Promotion

No one is going to attend the event if they don't know about it and social media is a good place to start. From Facebook to LinkedIn, social media platforms all provide lots of ways to promote your event. You can promote the event on your status or post in groups that are relevant to your target audience. Also, try to identify influencers that could help you spread the word. Your own staff can play their part too, so encourage them to share, comment and like.

Social media platforms also have options for paid advertising where you can specify the characteristics of your audience. Think about the lead in time you need to achieve target participation.

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4 ways insurance brokers can use online events

For many, the term 'online events' may conjure up images of live streamed business conferences or dull webinars. Here's some format ideas to help you think creatively about how to make your online event engaging for your audience:

1. **Workshops** - host a session where you share expertise within your own team to build their confidence, for example how to effectively communicate reasons for changes in premiums or highlight new risk solutions for clients such as cyber cover.
2. **Expert Interview** - a session where an expert and moderator discuss a topic. The expert can also answer questions asked by the audience in real time as well as some that have been pre-submitted. The interviewee could either be from your business or an industry expert like a risk manager or claims loss adjuster.
3. **Panel Discussions** - bring together a virtual panel of expert speakers to discuss their views on a particular subject. For example you could bring together a panel that includes HR and IT experts to discuss how working from home will change the way businesses operate. A great way to also engage with your topic expert customers.
4. **Networking** - organise a virtual meet-up between a selection of your clients (with common needs) to share experiences, network and engage.



How to host your online event

Tools of the trade

Social media channels, including LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram all allow you to broadcast live on your profile to either all your followers or a restricted audience. These easy-to-use features are a great way to get you started hosting online events and they're all free.

Beyond the solution provided by social media platforms there are a wide range of products available on the market specifically designed for online events. Here are just a few to get you started:

- HeySummit
- Google Meet
- GoToWebinar
- Slido
- Zoom Video Webinars

Still not sure? Ask your team, peers and also your customers about what platform works for them.

Please note: The solutions mentioned in this document have not paid to be included and Ignition does not endorse any of them. However, we hope they help you with your online events.

Keeping your audience engaged

Once you've got your audience online, you need to keep them there. Aim to make your online event as interactive as possible. Giving your delegates the opportunity to ask the speaker questions is an excellent way to encourage interaction with the content. Running polls during the session is also a great way to gain instant feedback.

After the event, send a "thank you" email to all your delegates. You should also share any relevant content that was used in the event. It's also a good idea to ask attendees to fill out a post-event survey to check your event's goals were met. And don't forget to invite them to your next event!



About Ignition

At Ignition, we've built a reputation as the marketing and digital specialists for insurance brokers.

Our success starts with us taking the time to understand what you're aiming to achieve and why. From creating professional brochures to revitalising your brand, from building web and mobile applications to detailed marketing consultancy projects, Ignition offer a wide range of cost effective marketing and development solutions to help Insurance brokers win and retain business.